



**Universal Acceptance Day Uruguay - May 26, 2025**

**UA Day Approach in Africa**

**Dr. AbdulKarim Oloyede - (ICANN)**

**Dr. AbdulKarim Oloyede :**

I think it's afternoon already over there so let me say good afternoon to you all. Let me first of all thank Laura for inviting me and also all the organizers of the UA Day in Uruguay. I would have loved to be physically present in Uruguay but unfortunately I am virtually present and I will be giving a brief presentation and I think this is one of the things because I know I wish I could speak Spanish because I know this is one of the beauty of universal acceptance and that is also one of the importance of why we are here today so that we understand the fact that it is not just only us. We have people from different parts of the world. We look different. We speak different languages but we live in the same world.

The internet, the world of the internet. The internet is what is connecting me to you today. So we live in a world whereby the internet connects all of us together and it is a world that is global. It is a world that is one world, one internet and we have that one internet to share and the fact that we have different language means

everybody must be accommodated and that is the importance of universal acceptance and that is also one of the reasons why I'm here today to make you understand that this is the world we live in and we have to ensure that the internet speaks our language because obviously when I wanted to start my presentation today I was thinking I have to speak one or two Spanish words and the reason why I was thinking along that line was because I'd never thought I'm going to be able to speak one or two languages at the same time. You mean...

I know that you would accept me more if I speak Spanish assuming I can speak Spanish fluently and I started speaking Spanish I'm sure you will be wondering that where is this African man where did he learn Spanish from because we have that affinity to our language everybody has the affinity to their language especially I know a lot of us must have traveled abroad when you hear somebody speak your language you look at the person you look at the person you look at the person you look at the person you look at the person you look at the person you look at look for the person because you have that affinity you have that something in common with your language and that is what universal acceptance is all about so I will be talking about that and I'll be talking about why what we have been doing in Africa just for you to know that universal acceptance is not just about one country it is not just about an individual it is not just about a group of people.

It is about all of us across the globe, across various stakeholders coming together to ensure that the internet speaks our language. It is very, very important. So let me briefly, I know Laura has introduced me, but let me tell you that I'm a Universal Acceptance Ambassador. And I am one of those that goes from one country to the other. And I'm so excited to be giving this presentation today because about three, four weeks ago, I was in a French country. I don't speak a lot of French, but I went to deliver Universal Acceptance in a French speaking country. And it was a new world to me because I understood so many things I never understood before. And it is good for me to be in the land of Spanish today to speak to you.

So that is the purpose of my presentation. And I want to acknowledge that the UA is significant globally and it is not just for Africa. So when we are talking about Universal Acceptance, I know the previous speaker has explained to you that what we want is for the domain names to be having in any character, not just in English character. It can be in any character. We are no longer talking about ASCII. We don't want to be talking about just ASCII characters anymore. And that is the importance of Universal Acceptance that you can have domain names that can be in any alphabet, in any language.

Whether it is in Chinese, whether it is in Arabic, whether it is in my local language, which is called Yoruba. In my local language, we have some specific things that is different from the English. So we want to have domain names that it is, you know, it is also across that line. And that is the essence of Universal Acceptance. And just like the previous speaker must have mentioned, it is not just something that one person can actually implement. It is something that has to be implemented across board. And that is why I will just share with you a lot of the things that we are doing in Africa.

So when we are talking about Universal Acceptance, it is ensuring that everybody, regardless of their location, whether they are based in Nigeria, or in the United States, whether they are based in Nigeria, whether they are based in Uruguay, whether they are based in Prague, it doesn't really matter. No matter their income, no matter their level of education, must have access to the internet. And not just having access to the internet. They must have access to the internet in the way they want to have access to the internet. Allow the internet to speak their language.

Let me tell you, in Africa, we have over 900 million. I know that is probably, you know, 450,000 times the size of Uruguay. Africa is a big continent. For those of you who have not been to Africa, and we have about 54 countries in Africa. But I must tell you, 58% of the African population lives in rural area. Okay? There is also what we call the digital divide between the urban and the rural areas. Okay? We have challenges in terms of infrastructure gaps, high costs, energy deficiency and a lot of things. Okay?

Well, one thing is that we are also committed to digital inclusion. We have platforms for advocacy, innovation and collaboration. And we have also been having our own universal acceptance day. We started about two years ago. Okay? For example, in Nigeria, we had a UAD that started two years ago and we're having it. And we've had our own 2025 UAD, in America. This was about a week ago, which was on the 20th of May. That was when we had the Nigerian UAD.

And in terms of across Africa, this is also happening just for you to know that it's not just happening in Uruguay. We've had UAD in Niger. We have in Kenya. We have in Namibia. We've had across African countries, a lot of these African countries, and it is happening across. And one thing that we need to emphasize is that everybody has to be on board. It is not just for you. It is not just for myself. For us to have a truly global internet, it has to be that whatever the character, whether it's in Arabic, whether it's in your Spanish, your domain names must be able to be in whatever character you want it.

And at the same time, just like what the previous speaker must have mentioned, that previously the top-level domains were actually three letters. But now what we're saying with universal acceptance is the fact that it is not just three letters. It can be longer than three letters. We want to have things like we're having now .Africa, .Johannesburg. We want to have .Nigeria. We want to have .ELP. We want to have it in whatever language. We want to have it in whatever content we want to have it, okay? And those, that is also very, very important for us and is also important for you and I. So that is the thing about universal acceptance.

And in Africa, we are linguistically diverse. We have over 2,000 languages. And that is why it is important for us that we need to have local content. We need to have our language identity online because Africa is diverse. Over 2,000 languages. And that is why it is critical for us to have internationalized domain names or we have email address internationalization.

And I want to tell you that there is rapid digital transformation that is happening across Africa. The new GTLD rounds in Africa now, we have .Africa, which has been in existence for some time now. And we're hoping that in the next GTLD round, we would also key into it. We want to have a lot of our content. We want to make sure that we're noted and names in this domain. Also, the African top level domain is also very, very active. And I'm sure we're also active and like you have internet society, internet society is also active with us here across Africa.

So, what we are doing is we're partnering, just like the way you are partnering with ICANN and with the USG and also just like we have also partnered with UNESCO. I'm sure. Probably. In his. is also partnering with you today there and this is something that you have to understand that it is happening across the globe okay in terms of challenges we need to be aware there is no awareness about universal acceptance especially from developers especially from students a lot of students when they are still doing their programming they are still doing programming the old-fashioned way they are not using the UTF-8 that was explained earlier

They are just doing the old-fashioned programming to program top-level domains to be in three characters. And that is why we have to tell everybody that our software must move from the legacy platform. We have to move to the non-ASCII domains, okay? And there has to be. And we also need to ensure that our public digital services is also keying into this.

Also, I want to also mention that we also have a national ICT plan that is also incorporating the internationalized domain. And one thing we have done

successfully in Africa is the fact that we came together as one continent and decided to modify our computer science curriculum to make sure that our computer science curriculum is not teaching our students just three-letter domain names, where students would know from the right from the university that they have to continue to make sure that the internet is universally acceptable, such that. And we have been able to do that.

So what we did was to bring African universities together. We met about two years ago in Morocco. And all of us came together and we put a lot of people together from different institutions in order to have a computer science curriculum. That computer science curriculum now reflects universal acceptance in it, just like because it is important for students to also do that.

Then, UA integration into digital inclusion programs. We're also doing that across Africa, okay? And if you know one of the best domain names that is doing well across the globe is .za, which is fully compliant with universality acceptance. We also have the .ng in Nigeria, which is also compliant. And it is important to know that our school curriculum is It is important for us, especially I know a lot of us, because I know this event is being held in the university, a lot of us as academics needs to key into this.

It is important for academics to key into this, and also we need to ensure that we have our future priorities, that everything is going to be fully UA ready, inclusion of all languages in the top level domain across the globe, and also the vision that we have in Africa is that our script, our identity, everybody can speak Yoruba, Aramaic on the internet, and that is why we are here today.

So what we are calling for is collaboration across borders, that we have to collaborate. You have to collaborate with us in Africa, we in Africa have to collaborate with you in Latin America, we have to collaborate with you in Uruguay, we have to upgrade our system such that it can accept all domain names and emails, it can be inclusive, okay, designed for every language and script.

So I want to say thank you very much, muchas gracias, thank you very much, and I hope you have learned one or two things or you've enjoyed one or two things. Thank you once again to the organizers for inviting me today.